GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:35
ANSWERED ON:20.11.2002
US REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
CHANDRA BHUSHAN SINGH;SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the latest report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom has put certain nations in the category of `Countries of Particular Concern`;

(b) if so, whether the Commission has mooted that India should also be put in the category of `Countries of Particular Concern` after Gujarat carnage;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA)

(a) No, Sir. The power to designate any country as a `Country of Particular Concern` (CPC) lies with the US Secretary of State, and not with the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The Secretary of State has not designated India as a CPC in the latest report on International Religious Freedom, issued by the State Department in October 2002.

(b) & (c) The Commission recommended to the Secretary of State, in a letter dated 30th September 2002 that India may be identified as CPC. The letter also contains a dissenting note from two of the nine Commissioners, including its Chairperson, opposing this recommendation and disagreeing that `in the case of India as a whole, it could be said that `systematic, ongoing egregious violations of religious freedom` had been `engaged in or tolerated` by the Indian government to an extent to warrant CPC status.`

(d) The US Commission on International Religious Freedom is a non-official body mandated by the US Congress. Government consider its report part of the internal process of a foreign government, and reject any interference in India`s internal affairs. It is well known that the Constitution of India guarantees equal religious, social and political rights to all its citizens, including minorities.